

The Saint of Gondawali



The Life and Sayings of
Shri Brahmachaitanya



K. V. Belsare

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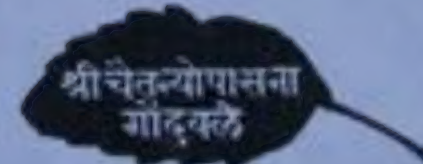
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Parentage and Childhood

1. Family History.
2. Parents.
3. Master's Birth.
4. Early years.
5. Marriage.

1. Family History :—

Shri Brahma Chaitanya came from a Kulkarni family of Marathi Brahmans. The family whose *Gotra* was Vashistha belonged to the white Yajurveda. Rudroji was the seventh ancestor of the Master on the paternal side. He was a small landholder. He lived on farming and kept himself just above want. But he was a *Vaishnava* by choice and used to visit Pandharpur four times a year without fail. In his old age he became a great *Bhakta* of Lord Vittal and laid the foundations of saintship in the Master's family. The greatgrandfather of the Master made his home in Gondawali, a small village near Dahiwadi, in Satara district, in the new state of Maharashtra. This humble Kulkarni was as poor as his forefathers. But he carried on very devotedly the family tradition of visits to Pandharpur. He loved company and helped devotees with food and drink. He was well-known for his service to

saints as also for his benevolence and humility. His genuine surrender to the will of God gave him a spiritual calm which influenced all those who came into contact with him. He had only one son named Lingopant.

Lingopant, the Master's grandfather, was born as a gift of the Lord Shiva. His coming into the family was very auspicious because with him the family entered on its period of material and spiritual prosperity. Lingopant showed quite early a remarkable understanding of men and their worldly problems. At the age of eighteen, he took over charge of the Kulkarniship from his father who then devoted his last days entirely to the Name of God. With sagacity and sincerity Lingopant discharged his duties so well that the Government appointed him Kulkarni for the whole Taluka and also gave him some Inam lands. At home he had an ideal housewife in Radhabai. She made their home a place of peace and plenty for guests and relatives as well as for the needy and the poor. In spite of heavy office duties, Lingopant never failed to attend to his daily prayers. He worshipped the family deity, did *Japam* of the Divine Name, studied the Bhagawadgita and did *Bhajan* every night. In addition he visited Pandharpur every month on the *Ekadashi* day and sincerely prayed to the Lord, to give him the holy gift of Inward Peace.

In course of time, Lingopant developed within himself the spirit of true devotion to the Lord. He kept constant remembrance of the Divine Name and offered himself to be guided by the will of God in all matters. When he grew old he found it difficult to visit Pandharpur every month. One day, however, he felt very miserable over it and prayed to Vittal for a solution. The Lord appeared in his dream the same night and said, "Lingopant! You are now too old to come over to Pandharpur every month. I have come, therefore, to stay with you. Unearth me in the field." The old man awoke with joy. He made his dream known to the people. All went in a procession to the spot. On digging into the field, two fine images of Vittal and Rukmini were found. They were installed near Lingopant's house with due devotion and ceremony. They can still be seen in Gondawali. Thus Lingopant not only maintained but successfully carried forward the material and spiritual traditions of his forefathers in the best way. No wonder then the Kulkarnis of Gondawali became the most distinguished and spiritually cultured family under him.

2. Parents :—

Raoji, the Master's father, was the eldest son of Lingopant. Temperamentally, Raoji was an

introvert. As a boy, he would often sit silent in a corner and close his eyes to look within himself. He would do *Japam* of the Divine Name with a liking quite unusual in a boy of his age. He was married at the age of twelve and was trained in the duties of Kulkarniship at sixteen. He did not, however, show much interest in worldly affairs. He spent much time in meditation and in the *Japam* of Ramnam. On being questioned by his father, Raoji unhesitatingly replied, "I cannot waste my time in making money." As a consequence, Raoji maintained a *status quo* after Lingopant handed over the family Kulkarniship to him. It soon became evident that the balance between the material and the spiritual activities in the family was getting heavy on the spiritual side. Raoji was a man of few words. His habits were simple. He did his duties well. He worked as a Kulkarni to all appearances. But in his heart of hearts, he was busy with the Name of God.

The Master's mother was a unique lady. She came from a family of devotees of Shri Rama. She was only eight years of age at the time of her marriage. She was named Gitabai. Being the eldest daughter-in-law in a large family, she had to take over the important duties in the home not long after marriage. The situation was not so easy. An aged and popular father-in-law, a serious-minded and spiritually disciplined husband,

an aged but kind mother-in-law, a large number of relatives, guests, servants and cattle—all these demanded the young lady's attention. She had to be busy, therefore, from morn till night. She cheerfully looked after all these duties and became an expert in the management of household affairs. She was married to a man in fortunate circumstances and so she could enjoy the peace and comfort of an affluent home. But she, the Master's mother, was truly selfless. With an unending capacity for physical labour and with a sublime indifference to personal pleasures, young Gitabai soon endeared herself to all in the home and outside. Her service to elders in the family was a model of duty. Hence Lingopant and his wife called her the presiding deity of the house of the Gondawali Kulkarnis.

Raoji's want of zeal in worldly affairs slowly slackened the finances of the family. Still they had enough and to spare for more than one generation. It helped Gitabai to be a boon to the hungry and the sick in the village. In fact, she was so magnanimous that her giving to the poor knew no bounds. She used to provide cowmilk, curds, butter, ghee, rice and also saris to poor village women who were in the family way and even thereafter. Her noble weakness was that she could not withstand misery in others so long as she could do something to relieve it. She had not much of formal educa-

tion. She could only read and write. But she saw life at such close quarters that she obtained a voluminous knowledge of men and matters. As a result she had definite opinions about human nature and its expressions in different situations. She possessed a passion for hospitality and guests were ceaselessly entertained by her in the house.

Gitabai was a handsome woman. She had a fair complexion. She was slim and graceful and possessed delicate features. But she was a woman of strength. She had acquired a serenity of mind out of a sincere resignation to the will of the divine. In the years to come, she saw many vicissitudes of fortune in the family. She had a woman's share of troubles, worries, and pains. She also saw tragedy and long partings. But the natural poise and magnanimity of her mind rarely deserted her. She had firm faith in Providence and possessed an ardent desire to maintain the lofty spiritual traditions of the family. The most remarkable thing about her was her genuine spiritual outlook on life. When the poor village women showed gratitude for her timely help and expressed a sincere desire to repay the kindness in some form, the Master's mother just smiled and remarked, "Look here! God is kind. He has given me more than enough. We must show our gratitude towards Him. Therefore, make it a point to per-

form one thousand *Japam* of *Ramnam* every day. That will be the fittest way to repay me." Gitabai was a mother quite worthy of the Master who sacrificed his all for the Name of the Lord.

3. The Master's Birth :—

A saint by name Sambhaji lived about ten miles away from Gondawali. He had kept the vow of silence for more than twelve years. He never spoke to anyone. Raoji and Gitabai once went to him. Gitabai was then about sixteen. The saint happily smiled at the couple, gave Gitabai an auspicious coconut and spoke the following words. He said, "God will bless you. Do not forget His holy Name." This unusual blessing of a silent saint bore its fruit and Gitabai was soon with child. A significant change came over her. She became meditative and gave herself more and more to the *Japam* of *Ramnam*. In due time, the Master was born on Wednesday, February 10, 1844 A. D. at sunrise in Gondawali. The news made Lingopant and the villagers very happy. Sugar was distributed among the people. All the village women came to see and bless the newborn babe. The family priest cast the horoscope of the child and Brahmins blessed it with Vedic mantras. The child was given the name of Ganapati.

4. Early years :—

The infant Master was very delicate and handsome. He became a pet not only of the grand parents but also of the old women in the village. Father Raoji, with all his detachment, felt delighted to see the child. He would say, "A look at the child fills me with delight." At the age of three, the Master became a companion to the old grandfather. There was an old midwife named Mukta who loved the child beyond measure. She would often take him home. At times the Master would go to her himself and demand food. The poor old woman would then lovingly feed him with rice and milk or with rice and curds. She would bring him back home to the waiting mother. He had a great attachment towards the family cows and they too loved him well in return. In his fourth year the Master was taught the alphabet which he learnt within a couple of days. The grandfather used to recite verses from the *Bhagawadgita* at bed time everyday. The Master quickly learnt them by heart. He had a special liking for *Bhajans* which was a daily feature in the house.

The Master showed signs of mental superiority at that early age. One day the grandfather asked the six year old Master, "Little Dear ! Suppose I give you a purse full of sovereigns. How

would you spend them?" The boy at once replied, "I would distribute them among the blind, the lame, the maimed and the poor." Grandfather further asked, "That is good! But if you are made a king what will you do?" The Master readily replied, "I will open a free choultry in my palace and will not allow anyone to be poor and without food in my kingdom." Tears of joy moved down the old man's cheeks when he heard the grandson's answers. After his emotion quieted down he remarked, "Look here, Raji! This is quite an unusual child. He is one of the chosen sons of God. I am sure he must have been a Yagi in his last birth."

The Master's thread ceremony came off during the same year. A learned Brahman named Pathak taught him the Vedic ritual. It took about three months. The intensely religious atmosphere in the home gave the little boy a fund of knowledge about Vedic gods and their significance. The family again was passionately attached to Lord Vittal and the yearly visits to Pandharpur created a deep impression of *Bhakti* upon the mind of the young Master. Pathak was soon impressed by the mental powers of his young pupil. When the course in Vedic ritual was completed, the Master inquired, "Sir, what comes next?" Pathak answered, "Next come the four Vedas and the six Darshanas." The Master said,

"Very well! Then teach me those things tomorrow." With an air of seriousness Pathak replied, "Nonsense! Each Veda needs twelve years and each Darshana needs as many years. How can you learn them tomorrow?" On this the Master retorted with an equal seriousness, "Sir, you may be right. But I cannot spare so much time for book-learning. I am sorry."

The Master had just completed his sixth year. The spiritual urge was now making its power felt in him. He became more meditative. He heard from his grandfather the stories of ancient boy *Bhaktas* like Dhruva and Prahlad. He began to sit still in *Asana* and do a lot of *Japan* with eyes closed. This, however, did not satisfy him. He felt a craving for solitude. On a certain day, therefore, when midnight had come and the house was asleep, the Master thought that it was time to steal out into the solitude. The night was dark but the shimmering stars above showed him the way to a rocky hollow by the riverside. The peace and stillness of the place were mystically enchanting and the Master sat there immersed in chanting the sweet Name of God.

When the grandfather awoke, he missed the child and rose to look for him. The whole house woke up and a frantic search was made for the boy. He was not found anywhere within the village. Finally, he was discovered by the riverside.

He was sitting like Shiva with eyes closed and lost in deep meditation. When he was brought home the old grandfather inquired, "Child, where had you been at this odd hour of the night?" The Master replied, "I had been to a solitary place i.e. to the riverside. One loses the sense of I-hood in the *Japam* of the Divine Name very quickly in such quiet places." The old man asked, "Were you not afraid of serpents and scorpions?" The Master simply laughed and remarked, "Who bothers about them, Grandpapa!" This simple event once for all revealed the powerful stimulus of the mystic life working within the mind of the Master. New thoughts awakened in him day by day and he turned his attention towards the secrets of his inner self.

The Master was sent to the village primary school. Anna Kharshikar was his teacher. The Master learnt very rapidly whatever the teacher taught in the class. Within a fortnight, he came to know all that Anna could teach. Then began the Master's truanship at school. He would go to school everyday, not to learn his lessons but to do mischief. He did mischief himself and got it done by others. He would tell his classmates that Anna's knowledge was very poor and that singing the Name of God was real knowledge. The children, therefore, left the class and retired to the fields to play. The school was soon deserted

and poor Anna, who lived on it, had to leave the village to avoid starvation.

The Master's formal education thus came to an abrupt end and it did so for ever. He then enticed the children to accompany him to the fields and the orchards every day. They played all sorts of games and did a lot of *Bhijana*. But they also did damage to the crops and the fruit trees. Now complaints against the Master began to pour in. One day mother Gitabai was fed up with them. She took the Master in confidence and with great affection said, "Look here, Ganapati! I have only one desire. I wish you to be a learned man and also to be the best Kulkarni in the family." The Master with an equal confidence and affection answered, "Mother! Believe me, I know all that is worth knowing. I assure you that I will act up to your desire." These words of assurance set the mother's mind at rest.

The Master had grown to be nine years. The old stories of mischief continued unabated. It was necessary to give him some employment and put a check upon his mischief. The mother, therefore, gave him the duty of leading the family cows out into the fields. The Master had to watch over them while they grazed. This duty came as a pleasant pastime to the growing boy. The village boys joined him in the fields. He would gather them around and tell them stories of ancient

saints. All would then dance and loudly sing the holy Name of God. The unbound cattle would naturally stray into the neighbouring fields and being about a lot of damage to the standing crops. Complaints about the Master, therefore, continued to pour in as before. One evening the mother was absolutely disgusted with them. She shouted, "Ganapati, why are you born to me? I am sick of these complaints. I do not know where to put myself. How can I face the complainants anymore!" The Master simply laughed at these words. The mother then became wild. She took a stick and made a dash for the boy. He, of course, escaped but the poor lady stumbled and fell over a heap of rubbish. At once the Master's eyes were full of tears. He ran back to help her. Her anger was no more when she saw the Master's tears. This incident put an end to the lad's truanship and thereafter he became quite a changed boy.

During these two years, a rapid change was creeping silently over the boy. To the common man the Master appeared to be the mischievous grandson of a rich and wellknown village Kulkarni. Who could discern the spiritual quality of the soul residing within the boy! At that age the Master was full of the milk of human kindness. He inherited from the mother impatience at the misery of others. He parted with whatever he possessed

to relieve the distress of his friends. He was restless over the ills of life and wanted to discover a remedy to lead people out of them. During the day he was busy with his pranks while during the night he was busy with silent *Japam* and meditation. He took an early bath everyday and sat by the riverside in *Japam* for a couple of hours. He worshipped the family deities on the *Ekadashi* day and then began meditation. He readily sank within himself. In fact, so deep was his selfwithdrawal that he would sit steady like a statue for hours with eyes closed. The mother had to awaken him from these depths of contemplation and remind him that he had yet to take food. He was seen to be busy with the *Japam* of *Ramnam* when not engaged in contemplation. Persons in intimate contact with him felt that there was something unusual about the boy. But none found him out. And how can we expect common men to follow the inner life of so great a soul!

5. Marriage :—

The village Hanuman temple was not far from the Master's house. *Bairagis* and *Sanyasis*, *Ramdanis* and *Varkaris* stopped there on their way to Pandharpur. The Master, now a boy of ten years, made friends with them and asked them a number of questions about God, His Grace,

His Love and His Name. One day an old pious *Ramdas* stopped there. He had a long grey beard and an humble bearing. It did not take long for the Master to make friends with the old holy soul. The Master met him alone and said, "Revered Man! Can you say why you have adopted the *Ramdas* robes?" The *Ramdas* kindly answered, "Because I want to see God." The Master inquired, "Have you seen him?" With tears in his eyes the old man made a reply, "No, my child, No! How can you see God without the guidance and grace of a *Guru*! I am in search of my *Guru*." This conversation changed the course of the Master's thoughts. He was a born mystic. He possessed the art of withdrawing himself from the noise of the senses since he was six years old. He could easily sink deep within his self with the help of the Divine Name. But the *Ramdas*'s answer revealed to him a very important aspect of the Pathway to God. He must seek the guidance and grace of a *Guru* in order to see God face to face.

The Master, therefore, coolly decided to leave the home in order to discover his spiritual guide. He prayed with all his heart for divine aid in his enterprise. Two friends, Damodar and Vaman, got ready to accompany the Master in his search for a *Guru*. One day after mid-night the three boys secretly walked out of Gondawali.

They reached Kolhapur in about a week and stayed there in the temple of the goddess Ambabai. There was something uncanny about the Master even at that time. His lovely eyes, handsome features, fair complexion, gentle face and sweet words were like magic to all those who came into contact with him. Pilgrims who visited the shrine for a *darshan* of the goddess were attracted towards the Master and they respectfully offered him fruits and flowers.

When the Master was missed at home, Raoji carried on an extensive search for him. But all was vain. The poor mother was absolutely upset. No one could say anything reliable about the boys. The parents of the Master were helpless. Damodar, however, could not get on for long and he soon left Kolhapur to return to Gondawali. He came home after three weeks and related their story to the Master's parents and grandparents. The mother was a bit relieved to know that the Master was safe and happy in Kolhapur. Raoji went there himself and persuaded the Master to return home.

Lingopant now began to think seriously about the Master's future. He argued that the Master's spiritual adventures would automatically tone down if he were married. His addiction to the company of Saints and Sanyasins, his preference for solitude, his partiality for God's contemplation

and his unusual appetite for *Japam* would wane and perhaps disappear when he gets engrossed in the carnal pleasures of life. Marriage, the old man maintained, would modify the Master's mystical zeal. With this aim in view, the Master was married in the coming year. The marriage function was celebrated with great pomp and ceremony for about a week. Free feeding of the poor was a notable feature of the function. The new couple was taken to Pandharpur for the *darshan* of Vitthal. Lingopant and his wife both passed away within four months after the Master's marriage. The grand old man of Gondawali was no more and the Kulkarni family entered upon a period of temporary dimness.

CHAPTER III

Initiation

1. Search for the Guru.
2. The Master's Master.
3. Master's Initiation.
4. The Goal Achieved.

1. Search for the Guru

The event of marriage did not bring about the desired effect. The Master, who was now twelve years of age, became more contemplative. The mother watched her son's growing tendencies and she began to feel worried over the success of his marriage. As a result, she started to admonish him about his deep indifference to earthly pleasures. Once the Master made an answer. He said, "Mother, I appreciate your anxiety about me. I do not hate worldly things. But I am convinced that they cannot lead me to Divine *Ananda*. Delights of desire are very short-lived. A soul overpowered by desire is carried away by attachment. Attachment makes us slaves to the pleasure of the flesh. Such slavery ends in tragedy. I do not want to repeat the story in my life." The poor mother was silenced by the Master's words. He devoted the nights to contemplation and the days to an un-

broken *Jagat* of the Divine Name. The earthly comforts of his rich home appeared to him like toys meant only for spiritual infants. He stayed in the home among bodily comforts but was above them. He stayed among his friends but was not one of them. Every day he sat on his bed at night and readily passed into a deep silence of the mind where he felt at home with God and His holy Name. This interior silence paved the way for the great incoming of Infinite Reality. His "I" and "Me" were completely spiritualised. But they were still finite. The Master realised that the intuitions of God which came to him so far revealed God's immanence. Hence there arose in him an intense and passionate longing to merge into the Transcendent Divine i.e. into the Infinite Beyond All. His soul became filled with a consuming eagerness to melt into the vast depths of the Divine Sea. But a complete surrender of the "I" and the "Me" at the feet of the *Guru* was the royal road to become one with the Infinite Being. Hence the pressing need of a *Guru* kept haunting him night and day. The need soon proved imperious and one day with a casual hint to the mother, he departed alone in search of a spiritual guide. He made it a rule to meet all those men and women who walked on the pathway to God. At that age, he possessed the capacity to judge aright the spiritual worth

of any person. "This power," The Master said later, "I had quite early and I got it through the chanting of the Divine Name."

The Master came across a large number of mystics. He saw the various penances practised by seekers to reach divine experience. The first mystic whom he met was a Kannada woman named Radhabai, at Haripur on the banks of the river Krishna. She was known for *Ana-dana*, i.e. for free feeding. She was also a great devotee of Shri Rama. So intense was her love that the image of the Lord showed human emotions when she sang *Bhajans* and prayer songs in daily worship. To the Master she said, "Dear Child ! I am still a *sadhaka*, i.e. a pilgrim on the way to God. Seek your *Guru* elsewhere." She sent the Master to a saint named Annabawa at Miraj. He blessed the boy and sent him to Shri Deva Mamlatdar at Satana. This man was a revenue officer as well as a great *Bhakta* of God. He kept the Master with him for a fortnight and then directed him to the great Swamy of Akalkote. The Swamy cheerfully welcomed the young Master and said, "Child ! You have my blessings. But I am not ordained to initiate you. Your *Guru* is elsewhere." The Master then met Shri Manik Prabhu, who sent him to Mount Abu with the words, "You will be initiated at the proper time." In the dense forests of Mount Abu, the Master met

a great yogi. He stayed with the yogi for two months, learnt as much yoga as the yogi knew and then left for Benaras. He met there the famous Andhra saint named Tallang Swamy and the two became great friends for all time. Tallang Swamy knew a great Sanyasin in Benaras who was an expert in Tantric methods. He voluntarily offered to teach *Tantra* to the young Master. The Master inquired, "How long would it take to complete your course?" The sanyasin answered, "Only twelve years!" The Master remarked "Twelve years! Why, teach me all your lore within three days. I have no more time at my disposal." The Sanyasin was surprised. He simply blessed the Master with the words, "You are a disciple of a rare order. I am not the Guru for you." The Master then went to the Himalayas. He stayed there for some time and came down to Calcutta via Ayodhya. He met there the famous Ramakrishna who remarked, "Well, child! Crucify your self. Murder your self yourself." With his blessings the Master came down to the Hyderabad State. As he was sitting on the banks of the Godawari, an unknown mystic appeared and spoke the following kind words. "Dear child! Go to Shri Tukaram Chaitanya of Yelegaon. He will initiate you." The Master immediately began his journey to Yelegaon.

2. The Master's Master :—

Yelegaon is a small village in Marathwada near Nanded. About a hundred and fifty years ago, there lived a poor Brahman Kashinath by name. He was so pure and pious that people revered him like a *Rishi* of the ancient times. He had no issue. His wife Parvati served God Dattatreya for twelve years. The deity blessed her with a boy who became a very great saint. The child whose name was Tukaram, was a mystical genius of a rare type. In his fifth year, he asked his father, "Dada! you sit with eyes closed for hours after bath. Why so?" Kashinath answered, "My boy, I contemplate on God." The child significantly remarked, "Well, can't you do it with eyes open? It is so natural." Soon after this incident, Tukaram was initiated by a holy and devout Sanyasin named Chinmayananda. The initiated boy often went to the solitary fields or to the riverside to sit in contemplation. So deep was his self-forgetting sometimes that the water of the river rose up to his neck without his being aware of it. Sometimes he sat in the fields in deep contemplation and completely forgot his own existence. He was then away from the home for days and the father had to bring him back in a state of ecstasy. When he became a full-fledged mystic, he guided a large number of seekers towards

the path of God. His affection for the common people knew no bounds and he was known as "Mother Tukaram" among them. He was absolutely childlike in his behaviour. He was loved by birds, cows and dogs. Farmers and children of the village were his great friends. He was extremely soft-hearted towards the poor and the miserable. He hated hypocrisy most. He behaved like a violent madman with those who came to test his power to perform miracles. He had supreme liking for both *Bhakti* and the Name of God. He was, therefore, as meek as a lamb with those who loved God and sought help and guidance in His way.

Shri Tukaram's life was full of strange and meaningful incidents. Here is one of them. One day the saint was sitting by the riverside with one of his disciples. A newly married couple came riding a country horse. The disciple said, "Mother Tukaram! Human beings can go into Samadhi. We know it. But can animals do so?" "Why not?" answered the great Tukaram and loudly spoke the words "*Hara, Hara, Hara*" to the horse. Immediately the horse and the riders went into a trance and remained motionless. After about an hour, he simply said, "Now depart." The horse and the couple quietly walked away. When the Master was questioned about this incident later at Gondawali, he remarked with a smile,

"Why it is a simple case of hypnotism. There is no miracle in it. It is a normal power of the true *yogi*."

Shri Tukaram was a splendid and living synthesis of *Yoga*, *Janana*, *Bhakti* and *Karma*. *Yoga* was natural to him from his birth. He was able to sit in deep contemplation even at the age of six years. His spiritual master was a *Sannyasin* who gave him the legacy of asceticism and renunciation. Shri Tukaram remained a bachelor and lived the life of a recluse without his red robes. He was engaged in intense spiritual activity because he was busy with the redemption of the disciples who crowded around him. In addition to these he was a *Bhakta* of the front rank. He visited Pandharpur more than twice a year. So intense was his devotion to Lord Vitthal that he went into ecstasy the moment he saw the deity in the temple. He sang loudly the holy Name of the Lord and abandoned himself to a dance of divine joy. He loved his disciples more than a parent and kept himself present either physically or spiritually near them in their last moments. He used to say, "All is well that ends well. If you are aware of the Divine Name in your last moments, you are sure to get a spiritual promotion. I help my disciples to sing the Name of the Lord in their last moments." The Master once remarked, "My Master (i.e. Shri Tukaram) has taught me the art of giving

a spiritual lift to the self at least at the time of death. Hence those who chant the Name of God need not worry over their spiritual future."

The essence of the preaching of Shri Tukaram was as follows :—

"God is the home of happiness. He is the ultimate aim of man. God desires man as much as man desires God. God is kind and full of grace. But he needs an offering for being pleased. The best offering which God likes is the ego i. e. the *Ahamkar*. Man is the maker of his self. He suffers because he does evil either in thought or in deed. Selfishness i. e. attachment to the things of the earth is the root of all evil and sin. He who desires to experience the Joy of God must free his mind from hatred, greed, selfishness and arrogance. Put your faith in the Divine Name. Sing it with sincerity and feeling. Offer yourself to God. Seek delight not in wealth, not in sensuous pleasures, but in the love of God. Hold fast to the Divine Name. Seek God's grace with humility. God will then extend His helping hand in everything you do. Inward Peace is the true gift of God to man."

3. Master's Initiation :—

It is a commonplace that saints possess clairvoyant vision. They can penetrate the veil of time and can see events ahead of schedule. When

the Master started for Yelegaon, Shri Tukaram came to know it. Three days before the Master's arrival, he kept on shouting "Beware, O Villagers, Beware ! A robber is on his way to this place. He is coming to rob me outright." The villagers knew very well that Shri Tukaram was as penniless as a man could be. Hence they could not quite follow him. He, of course, meant the perennial spiritual wealth which he possessed in an immense measure. He was eager to disseminate his spiritual lore. He came across a large number of ordinary souls and was fed up with the demands of the worldly-minded. It was natural, therefore, that he felt very glad to receive one who possessed a genuine yearning for divine experience.

The Master came to the village in the morning. Shri Tukaram had gone out. No one knew when he would return. The Master took a bath in the river and waited for the Guru's *Darshan* with an empty stomach. He sat outside the house immersed in *Japan*. He seemed indifferent to himself and also to his surroundings. The day had almost gone. The sun was about to set. In a few minutes, he heard children shouting. The great Tukaram was coming home. Somebody told him that a young lad of about fourteen years was eagerly waiting for his *darshan* the whole day. "Where is that boy, that great thief?" shouted Shri Tukaram. The Master stood up and

at the first sight of his *Guru* was overpowered with emotion. He could not move. He simply stood before his *Guru* with folded hands and tearful eyes. The *Guru* roared, "Come on, I am going to murder you self." The Master humbly replied, "O *Guraji* / I surrender myself to you." With these words the Master fell on Shri Tukaram's feet. Now the *Guru* could not withhold his own tears and he lifted the Master in a deep affectionate embrace.

This loving embrace of Shri Tukaram marked the climax of the Master's spiritual endeavour. With it began a deep relationship between two great souls which was no less than divine in all its aspects. Shri Tukaram was more than a mother to the young Master. He confided the deepest secrets of his life to this unusual disciple. The Master stayed for about nine months at Yelegaon. He rendered all kinds of service to Shri Tukaram. He swept the house clean every morning. He brought water from the river and bathed the *Guru* with hot water. He washed his clothes. He kept the pipe ready for a smoke. He served food to the *Guru* and himself lived on the crumbs left behind. At times Shri Tukaram went away far into the fields and shared a farmer's fare. On such days the Master had to starve. Every night he massaged the body of the *Guru* until he fell asleep. He never allowed his feet to

touch the *Guru's* bed. Shri Tukaram's word was law for the Master. Sometimes the *Guru* put the disciple to a severe test. He would order the Master either to jump into an old well or to plunge into a flooded river or to carry a very heavy bundle of sugarcanes on the head. The young Master implicitly obeyed the order. He underwent much physical suffering in the process. The outwardly severe *Guru*, however, embraced the Master in the end and gave him almost a motherly kiss. The behaviour of Shri Tukaram thus appeared to be strange. The people in the village felt it mythical that a lad of fifteen years had come from an unknown place and had surrendered himself body and soul at the feet of the great Tukaram. The Master's search for a *Guru* went on for a considerable period. But when he came face to face with Shri Tukaram, he obtained an inward peace and immediately felt that his search had come to an end. Thus the relationship between the Master and his *Guru* was mystical in essence and, therefore, its vital aspects lie beyond description.

During his stay at Yelegaon, the Master became an adept in contemplation. The senses and the intellect were left behind. All desires were abandoned. The soul became nakedly pure. The Master was ready for the final plunge into the Infinite Aspects of the Divine Being. The holy

day of Shri Ram-Navmi arrived. Shri Tukaram led the Master to a nearby field. Both had a bath in the river. The Guru seated the disciple in front of him under a Banyan tree. He said, "My child! You have been with me for nine months. I have put you to a very severe test. But you have passed it. You are now more than fit for Grace Divine. I give you today what the great Vaidiktha gave Shri Rama, what my Guru has given me. Receive it with all thy heart." The seated Master was already in a state of ecstasy when he heard these words. Shri Tukaram whispered the *Mantram* "Shri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Jaya Rama", in the Master's ear and placed his right hand on the Master's head. The Master immediately lost himself into an intensely deep *Samadhi*. He became absolutely one with Reality. When he returned to normal consciousness, his soul was encircled with the flames of divine love. He was rapt into the supernal joy of the Divine Being. He came to know God by himself becoming the Divine. He thus became a true saint.

The attainment of sainthood was almost a new birth of the soul. Shri Tukaram, therefore, gave a new name to the Master. He became *Brahma Chaitanya*. Along with the new name he was also given the authority to initiate those who were struggling for the light of God. After

about a week, the Master was asked to go on pilgrimage and to visit his parents at home. Shri Tukaram said, "My Son! Times are bad. They will be worse. Men will become morally and spiritually weak. They will live for the desires of the flesh. Selfishness will be ever on the increase. In these circumstances, the poor and the meek and the lowly will badly need solace. Render service to them. Make *Ram Mandirs* the centres of spiritual practice. Let the Divine Name be the main *Sadhana*, surrender to God the main gateway to God's Grace. Help the needy and the poor. Spread love among men. Show them the way to inward peace. My blessings are ever with you."

4. The Goal Achieved :—

In this way the Master reached the consummation of contemplative life. He gave all he had and all he was to Shri Tukaram while Shri Tukaram gave him in return all he had and all he was. The Guru and the disciple i. e. the I and the You merged into One Absolute Reality. Shri Tukaram bestowed upon the Master the most invaluable jewel of Divine Experience. On the one hand it meant a total disappearance of the Master's self-hood and on the other it meant a full appearance of the Divine in the heart of the Master. The veil of illusion was rent once for all and he became a permanent denizen of the transcendental divine

order. His body, mind and soul became channels of Divine Light. The Master attained *Moksha* i. e. Liberation from the wheel of Time. He became a *Jivanmukta*, a God walking on earth. He was filled with divine knowledge. He became an instrument of divine will. His words were filled with divine grace. He shared the strength and the immovable peace of the divine being. In short, the Master's self was devoured by God and so God alone now reigned in the Master's heart.

The age of the Master was about sixteen years. He became the young saint Shri Brahma Chaitanya. He prepared to leave Yelegaon. The parting of this unique spiritual pair was divinely human. When the Master fell at the feet of Shri Tukaram, both went into ecstasy and were beside themselves for some time. The *Guru* enveloped the disciple in an affectionate embrace and gave him a send off with tears of joy. The Master left Yelegaon with tears of joy and sorrow. He moved towards the North. On his way he stopped in the dense forests near Ujjain. He stayed there in *Samadhi* for two months and then went into the Himalayas. After residing in the holy regions of the ancient mountains for some time, the Master felt that he should take upon himself the work of spiritual awakening in society. He decided to visit the holy places where he might come across sincere seekers of God. So he came to Ayodhya. There he

met a *pandit* named Ramahastri from Benaras. He was a very learned *Vedantist* who ridiculed the path of *Bhakti*, especially the Name of God. One day he said to the Master, "Look here, young man! You are under an illusion that the chanting of the Divine Name will lead to divine experience. But the worst part of it is that you bring other untutored souls under that illusion. This is simply sinful." The Master smiled and gently replied, "Revered Sir! My illusion—if it is an illusion at all—is one of the Divine Name. It is better than the illusion about material possessions and barren learning. But God will soon decide the truth. He will dispel either my illusion or yours." The same evening the *pandit* and his wife ate a water-melon on the banks of the Sharayu river. At night the lady got a severe attack of diarrhoea. The town physicians were helpless. The patient began to collapse. The *pandit* then, as a last resort, sat uttering the name of Shri Ram by the side of his ailing wife. In about ten minutes, she fell into a deep sleep. The next morning she became normal. The *pandit* ran to the Master and straightway fell at his feet. He related the whole story with tears in his eyes and begged for favour of initiation. The Master complied with his request. This *pandit* brought the Master to Benaras where he stayed for four months.

A Bengali disciple took the Master to Calcutta.

There be performed The *Harikat*. *Harikat* means a spiritual bazar in which all the sadhus are practised simultaneously for one week with free feeding to all. It was a grand affair. From Calcutta, the Master came to Indore. In this place, a rich lady called Jiji put his sainthood to an inhuman test. She fed him with burning embers and balls of chilli powder. The Master very nobly stood the test and then she became a very faithful disciple. He left Indore for Nashik and from Nashik he went to Gondawali. He stopped in the Hanuman temple. It was about eight years that he had left the place. He had grown a beard and had donned the red robes of a *Bairagi*. He was thus completely changed. Mother Gitabai came for his *darshan*. She, however, did not recognise him. He bowed down to her in his heart of hearts. She said, "Oh Saint ! Do you know the whereabouts of my son who has long back left the home ?" The Master asked, "Mother, Can you describe him ?" She replied, "Yes. He is really handsome. He utters *Ramaam* all the time and he has an enchanting tongue." The Master smiled and said, "Well, Mother ! I think I know the boy. You will meet him in a few days." The mother felt assured and relieved. Next morning the Master left Gondawali to go to his wife's village. The young lady was about sixteen years of age. She came for his *darshan* along with

her mother. The old lady asked the Master, "Oh young Saint! My son-in-law has left the house long back. This poor girl is pining for him. Can you show us any trace of him?" The Master gently replied, "Mother! There is no cause for worry. I know him well. He has become a Sadhu. Let this girl do a lot of Japam and he will surely come back within a year." He then went to his sister's village. She recognised him but he disappeared into the woods before she could stop him. He proceeded to visit the holy places in the South. After visiting Shri Rangam, Madura and Rameshwaram, he came back to Yelegaon. He stayed with Shri Tukaram for some days and then returned to Gondawali to meet his parents openly.

CHAPTER IV

The Ideal Householder.

1. Home Return.
2. The First Wife.
3. The Householder.
4. The Great Famine.
5. Visit to Shri Tukaram.
6. Raja of Indore.
7. The Second Wife.

1. Home Return :—

The Master returned to Gondawali in the March of 1666. He stopped in the *Hannuman* temple. When it was dusk he went to his house and cried "Jaya Jaya Raghuvir Samarth." The mother brought alms to be given to the *Ramdasi* at the door. Something impelled her to ask him about her missing son. The Master replied, "Mother, be at peace, you will meet your son tomorrow." The next morning he went to his house again. When Gitabai came out he said, "I do not want alms, give me the curds in the stone vessel standing in the kitchen corner." She got the curds and was about to offer it when the Master looked straight into her eyes and smiled. The gesture was so significant that the mother cried out "Oh, he is my Ganapati!" and clasped the Master

in a motherly embrace. She actually wept over him and could not speak for some time. Then she simply remarked, "Ganapati! Nine long years I have kept waiting for you. You were so indifferent to my woes." In the meantime Raoji and others arrived on the scene. The Master touched his father's feet. His chums ran to see him. In fact, the whole village gathered around the saint.

Soon the news went round that Lingopant's grandson had come back as a *Ramdasi* saint. The Master was about twenty two years of age. He returned to Gondawali after a period of nine years. He went out as a young lad in search of a *Guru*. He met his *Guru* in due course. He was initiated and raised to the level of sainthood. At the instance of Shri Tukaram, the Master entered the *Ramdasi* order. Therefore, he came back as a young *Ramdasi* with a red gown, a fine beard, flowing hair, wooden sandals, and a *kudri* in his hand. He looked indeed a young saint with a spiritual personality which at once inspired respect.

A stream of visitors began to pour in to meet the Master. They paid their respects to him and spoke to him about their worldly woes. He was extremely sympathetic towards them. But he spoke to them only about God, His Grace, His faith, His love, His kindness and His holy Name. At home he became the main centre of interest. Mother, father, and friends listened to him with

rapt attention every night when he narrated his adventures and described the great saints he had seen. Day by day the crowd of visitors increased. A small platform, therefore, was raised in front of the *Vitala Mandir* and the Master used it to meet the people.

2. The First Wife :—

Some relatives and chums of the Master did not like his growing popularity. They thought that his sainthood would disappear along with his beard and red robes. So they slyly proposed a coming back to normal style of life. The Master readily agreed and on an auspicious day changed himself into a common worldly person. The mother was extremely happy over this change. She then asked the Master to get his wife to Gondawali from her father's place. He gave his consent and personally brought her home.

Saraswati was the name of the Master's wife. She was born in a family of learned and pious Brahmana. She was pious as well as fair and handsome. She grew up into a tall, slim and sweet girl of seventeen years. She saw her husband after a long period. It was a period of mental suffering which she spent in the *Japam* of *Ramnam*. When she came to stay with the Master, she soon realised that the man with whom her lot was cast, was quite an unusual figure. She came to know that

his ways of thought and modes of action, his ideals and ambitions were quite unlike those of others. Everything about him was so uncommon, was indeed supremely holy. Hence she soon forgot the days of long parting and thanked God that she was offered the rare opportunity of staying with him. The most warm-hearted relations immediately grew between them. To say the naked truth, their relations were full of understanding, affection and sympathy from beginning to end.

Saraswati was a high-souled woman of devotion and dignity. She no doubt endured the Master's separation with silent suffering. But she had her desires. The Master, therefore, began to train her mind for a synthesis of the worldly and the spiritual. The Master's ideal was to turn his home into a temple of God. This needed a balance between the active and the contemplative modes of life. Hence he taught her first the art of active life. It consisted in an honest discharge of all those duties which a housewife shares in a normal home. He then taught her the art of contemplation. It consisted of an effort to turn the mind inwards away from the noise of the senses. Such a turning inwards is very easily achieved through a sincere and devoted uttering of the Name of God. When the seeker learns contemplation, he is dead to self but alive to God. He lives in the presence of God within the heart. The Master's daily

training had its effect. In his benign companionship, young Saraswati soon developed a sincere longing to share her husband's way of life. She determined to contribute towards the attainment of the Master's ideal and to prove herself a worthy wife of the great man. On being questioned by her mother about her married life, Saraswati told her parents that it was impossible to gauge the greatness of the Master. She said, "The Master, I am convinced, is not an earthly being. He is a God on vacation upon the earth." A spiritual companionship with the Master, therefore, became her consuming passion.

5. The Householder :—

When the Master settled down as a householder, he spent an ideal day. He regularly arose early in the morning and began his day by touching the feet of God Vittala and his parents. He joined the morning prayers, *Arati* and *Bhajans*. A part of *Dambodh* was read as text which he explained to the people. Visitors then came to see him. He took a personal interest in the problems of each visitor and pointed to a practical course of conduct. He never forgot, however, to suggest that the chanting of the Divine Name was an essential ingredient of a truly successful life. At midday the Master took his meal. He was generally accompanied by guests. After a couple

of hours rest, he would read and explain the *Bhagavata* or the *Bhagawadgita* or the *Ramayana* of Tulasidas in the *Vithal Mandir*. Again he met the visitors. There was daily *Bhajan* at night after a light meal. All went to bed when the *Arati* was over.

Saraswati soon proved an ideal partner. She looked conscientiously after the needs of the Master's parents and managed with equal efficiency the juniors and servants in the family. She spoke with a harmless tongue and never allowed the visitors to depart without something to eat and drink. She denied all personal convenience in order to look after the persons who came to meet the Master. Mother Citabai felt happy to see the Master thus leading a normal life with the whole-hearted co-operation of his devoted wife. One day she called the Master aside and said, "Ganapati, I am now more than satisfied with you. You are leading an ideal life. But I have a desire and you must fulfil it. You know that your father is old. You must, therefore, take over charge of the family Kulkarniship from him and give him relief." The Master agreed to do so. The next day he took charge of all the papers and began his work. In a week's time the house changed its appearance. A crowd of people came to see the Master on business. Old days seemed to return. The Master proved to be an excellent Kulkarni. He visited

the Mamlatdar's court with land records as was the custom. He settled a large number of old disputes very satisfactorily and proved himself to be a very able adjudicator in many complicated cases. The work went on for four months and all the people felt very happy. One day, however, he handed over the charge to someone without the knowledge of the mother and never did the work again. The poor mother had to be silent over it.

4. The Great Famine :—

The Master's mission was to awaken the spiritual urge in the souls of all those who met him. He spoke unceasingly of the beauty and sublimity of spiritual life and advocated the chanting of the Divine Name as the Royal Road to reach the feet of God. His arguments were very simple and effective. To the simple-minded and untutored villagers he said, "Man badly needs peace and comfort. The peace derived from earthly goods is superficial and short-lived. It is always infected by a want. But the peace derived from God is whole and for all time and free from want. Hence enter the path of God. Once a man enters the path of God life becomes light, happy and free from worry. God is keen to be with man. He desires man more than man desires Him. He leads man to peace and joy if man follows His will. God is always near us and within us. But we are away from

Him. To reach God and get His guidance, we must become aware of His presence. Such awareness is created by uttering His holy Name. His Name draws His Grace towards us. A life of His Grace is a life of inward peace and comfort. This is spiritual life."

The Master's saintship slowly began to acquire a sacred status among the people. They began to arrive in large numbers for being initiated. During the course of some years, a large number of persons received initiation from the Master. These persons sincerely invited him to visit their homes. As a consequence he could not stay continuously for long in Gondawali. He visited a number of places in the district and outside. Wherever he went he was accompanied by a large number of people. He used to visit Pandharpur for more than twice a year. He invited a large number of people to come to Gondawali. He made them stay with him for many days and taught them the unearthly beauty of divine love, the supreme value of the Divine Name, the great need of a moral character and the greatness of *Anasana*, i. e. of feeding the poor. The Master's home gradually became a centre of spiritual education.

In the meantime came the devastating famine of 1876. The Bombay Government started some projects to help the starving millions. But their

measures proved inadequate. The Master, therefore, began a new project in Gondawali. It was a simple project. He owned a number of fields near the village. Earth from one field was to be transferred to the other. About a hundred and fifty bullock carts were engaged to do the work. Every person who worked there was given one *Roti* and a cup of curry. When the news spread that the saint of Gondawali gave food to the starving poor, a large number of men, women and children from the surrounding villages gathered there. The project was carried on well and nearly one thousand and five hundred persons were fed every day. The Gondawali villagers all co-operated. The Master's grain-stores were thrown open to the people and Saraswati personally supervised the food arrangements. The Master distributed the food with his own hands. When he saw the mass of starving humanity struggling for food, tears ran down his cheeks. The work went on for a couple of months. One day the Raja of Aundh passed that way. When he saw the thousand men and women working in the fields, he stopped his carriage and inquired, "Where is the Raja who feeds these people?" A farmer replied, "No Sir, he is no Raja. He is a saint, i. e. a *Maharaja*!" The Raja got down and went to meet the Master. He became the Master's disciple after some days.

5. Visit to Shri Tukaram :—

Saraswati saw quite a new aspect of the Master's personality during the famine activity. She found that his heart was full of the milk of human kindness. But a chum of the Master named Vaman Shastri was surprised to find that love of God and love of man sat side by side in the Master's heart. Being well-versed in the Vedantic texts he could not follow how the two went together with equal status. He said to the Master, "Ganapati, which is greater, the love of God or the love of man?" The Master replied, "Of course, the love of God! We must love God with all our heart, mind and soul." Vaman readily asked, "But if you do so, how can you love man equally well?" The Master smiled and very lovingly answered, "Vaman, you have gone through the Upanishads and the Bhagawadgita. The scripture says that God is pure love, i. e. *Ananda*. He created the world out of *Anand*. Love is God's nature. The law of love is the law of God. Man has special significance regarding this law. Creation is an expression of God's love. Man is the crown of creation. That is to say, man is made to love. He is most like God when he loves creation. God, however, is more than creation. God gives Himself to those who give themselves wholly to Him. God arises in the heart of man through entire self-giving, i. e.

through love. Love begets love. Then love alone flows out of the man like a fresh stream. Thus love of God in the heart goes along with love of man in social life. The Divine Name installs God in the heart of man. The divine presence in the heart fills the man's life with love for creation. Shri Tukaram taught me this great secret of divine love." Vaman was satisfied with the Master's reply.

The Master made occasional reference to Shri Tukaram in the course of his conversations. Saraswati's curiosity was awakened and she keenly desired to see the great Tukaram. Some days later the Master asked mother's permission to leave for Yelegaon. She roared, "Look here, Ganapati! You were away for nine years when you went to your Guru. If you are really going away again, do not leave your wife behind." Saraswati, therefore, accompanied the Master to Yelegaon. Shri Tukaram was very glad to receive his chosen disciple with his bride. He treated Saraswati with more than a mother's affection. After a month's stay, the Master prepared to leave. When Saraswati touched Shri Tukaram's feet, he lovingly said to her, "Child! Ask me your desire and it will be fulfilled." The urge of femininity came up in her mind and she said, "Father! I desire a son, like the Master." Shri Tukaram looked at the Master and both smiled meaningfully at her demand. Still the Guru said, "Dear

Child! Your desire will be fulfilled." He gave her an auspicious coconut and saw the couple off from Yelegaon.

Saraswati sensed that there was something which the Master did not want her to do. On the way, the Master said, "Well, Saraswati! you have lost a rare opportunity." She asked him what it was. He answered, "You know that Shri Tukaram is a spiritual giant. He possesses untold spiritual wealth. He can give anyone the gift of Divine *Ananda* with the least difficulty. *Ananda* is eternal while worldly things are ephemeral. But unfortunately you were carried away by a desire for them. Why did you ask for a child when Shri Tukaram could have given you divine experience? You will have a son but he will be short-lived." The Master's words proved very effective. Saraswati understood why the Guru and the Master both smiled at her demand for a son. She keenly realised her mistake and was swept with a deep and violent feeling of repentance. She cried and told the Master, "Lord! This Saraswati is yours body and soul. I am extremely sorry. Now show me the path of *Ananda*."

Saraswati became a true penitent. She could not explain to herself how she fell a prey to her femininity. The Master consoled her. He said, "God is no doubt the fountain of *Ananda*. But a person who possesses no urge towards Him does

not experience it. Spiritual progress is possible only when there is an inward thirst to drink of that fountain. That thirst is kindled in you. It is a good omen." He brought her to Nasik. The couple stayed in a Shiva Mandir on the banks of the Godawari. They lived on alms and sometimes had to face starvation. For three months the Master taught Sarawati the Art of Contemplation. It consisted of an inward *Japam* of the Divine Name. After sufficient practice, it produced a vacant and a silent mind. She could descend into herself and stay there for a couple of hours without any strain. This achievement changed her whole outlook on life and she became a true *sadhika*. With her consent then she was sent back to Gondawali with a disciple called Krishnaji. Gitabai was glad to see her. One day Gitabai delicately inquired whether the Master treated her well. With tears of gratitude and deep love, Sarawati replied, "Mother ! I can only say that we all are very fortunate. The Master is the divine in human form. We have yet to understand him."

6. Raja of Indore :—

The Master left Nasik for Indore. An old milkman, who was a devoted disciple, was waiting to see him. The old man was above seventy and had spent twelve years in doing a sincere

Japam of *Ramam*. When the Master met him he said, "Master ! I have only one desire. I desire to be cremated by your hands." "It will soon be so," the Master answered. A week later the Master went to his house at dawn without previous intimation. The old man was sitting in his bed and was busy with *Mam* Puja, i. e. an Inward worship of the Master. The Master called him and said, "Look here ! Open your eyes. I have come to receive the Puja personally today." The old man had tears of joy when he saw his deity actually sitting in front of him. He finished his bath and worshipped the Master. The Master gave him a cup of milk with his own hands and said, "Dada ! Now all is well. God is pleased with you. His Grace is descending. The most auspicious moment in your life has come. Place your head on God's feet and say Ram Ram." The milkman knew no other God but the Master. So he put his head on the Master's feet with the words Ram Ram and put it there for ever. The lucky man had breathed his last on the Master's feet. Spiritually it was a sublime occasion. The Master then cremated the old disciple himself.

Tukoji Rao Holkar, the Raja of Indore, loved the Master well. Sometimes he invited the Master to the palace and the Master sometimes complied with the request. It so happened that at this time there was a conflict between the Raja and

the British Resident at Indore. The Raja was insulted and as a result became extremely restless. He sought the Master's favour to get back his peace of mind. A number of messengers arrived and the Master went to the palace. It was past noon and so extremely hot. The Master went upstairs and found the Raja alone intensely looking out at something through a window. Gently touching his shoulder, the Master said, "O Raja ! What is it that you are looking at with such deep attention ?" The Raja turned round, touched the Master's feet and with tears in his eyes said, "Master ! what a life ! I am so miserable. I am a Raja. I have all the comforts that wealth can afford. But I do not enjoy a restful sleep. Look at that beggar on the other hand. He sits under the shade of a tree on the road. He eats crumbs of bread. But as he is eating them, he is enjoying a nap. Is he not more happy than me ?" The Master seated the dejected Raja by his side and spoke to him about life, kingship and God. The Master said, "O Raja ! Be composed and listen. Firstly, you are a human being. You possess the power to think. Have you ever thought about life as a whole ? Have you anytime examined the way in which you live your life ? If you do so, you will find that Ignorance of the real self is the cause of your unhappiness. You are a prince, you possess security, wealth and authority. Your

subjects give you an exalted position. But it is a man-made distinction. You are a human being as good as anyone among your subjects. Hence rise above all social and man-made distinctions. Secondly, your kingly position implies a duty. As a king, you possess vast opportunities of doing good to millions of poor people in the state. Hence you ought to live a life full of good works. Thirdly, remember the ancient maxim, namely, the subjects follow the ways of their king. You must live a holy life. People should revere you like a sage. God is the home of holiness. Hence mix God in your good works to make them holy. Sing the Name of the Lord and pray to Him for guidance." The Master left the Raja quite happy.

7. The Second Wife :—

Some days later the Master returned to Gondalali. With Saraswati at the head of affairs, his home now became a place of spiritual solace and Sadhana. A large number of disciples surrounded him and he was busy training them in the various aspects of spiritual life. As time went on Saraswati was with child and mother Gitabai felt extremely happy over it. A really beautiful boy was born to the Master's wife at the proper time. The child was a miniature image of the Master and looked quite handsome. Gitabai desired to name the child with great ceremony. The

Master, however, tactfully avoided the celebration of the function and Saraswati alone truly understood the meaning of his behaviour. The child died of pneumonia after a few days. Sometime later Saraswati started developing low temperature. The Master arranged for proper medical treatment. It did not have the desired effect and she showed signs of pernicious anaemia. There was one thing quite remarkable about her. During her illness, she never failed to keep up her daily exercise in contemplation. That gave her a serenity of mind which is rarely found in ladies of her age. She knew that her end was near. On the last day, she quietly took her bath, sat in contemplation as usual and then touched the feet of the elders for permission to depart. She sat in *Siddhasana* in front of the Master and very peacefully breathed her last in the *Japam* of *Ramam*. The Master calmly remarked, "Saraswati was a true *Yogini*."

The death of a virtuous and saintly daughter-in-law came as a shock to Gitabai. A year had to pass before she could completely recover from it. Once more being proposed to the Master, as was the custom in those days, he was quite indifferent to the affair and carried on his spiritual work with zeal. One day Gitabai put the matter in clear terms. She said, "Ganapati! I wish to see you married again. You must not

disobey me." The Master replied, "Well, I consent on condition that I choose the girl and not you." The mother agreed and remained silent. On some day the Master went to a village called *Aipadi*. The *Deshpandi* of the place had six daughters. One of them was born blind. The Master chose her as his second wife. On the appointed day, he went alone to the village, finished the marriage ceremony and got the blind girl home to Gondawali. He presented the new daughter-in-law to the mother with the words, "Look here, Mother! I have got a new daughter-in-law for you. She is so humble that she would never look at you with her eyes." The mother understood the meaning of the Master's remark when she saw that the girl was wholly blind. She was absolutely disappointed and did not know what to do. In the end she simply remarked, "Ganapati! You are what you were in childhood. Your saintship is a fake. You are entirely unreliable." Something more lay in the womb of future. *Raoji* and the Master's younger brother passed away within a year. His sister *Muktabai* followed next. Within a period of one and a half years, the family of the Gondawali *Kulkarnis* was reduced to three members, namely, old Gitabai, the Master and his blind wife. The old lady reconciled herself to the new girl.

CHAPTER V

The Ram Mandir

1. The Holy Shrine.
2. Spiritual Conversion.
3. Art of Self-surrender.
4. Conflict with Orthodoxy.
5. Crisis of Death.

1. The Holy Shrine :—

The Master celebrated the *Ram Navam* festival in April, 1890. A large number of people attended the function. One day the Master was sitting in the field with a group of disciples. A sincere disciple asked him, "Master ! I have been with you for more than three years. I marked one thing about you. You remained absolutely undisturbed by any kind of event, either good or bad. May I know the secret of your poise of mind ?" The Master was happy at the question. He answered, "You have asked a valuable and useful question. A magic *mantram* is the secret of my inward poise. The *mantram* is very simple. It is "Lord ! Let Thy will be done, not mine." The disciples were surprised. The Master, therefore, added, "Believe me what I say is the truth. It is the holy secret of a saint's success in life. When I ask you to utter the Name

of God, I want to convey to you this great secret of spiritual life. You should submit to the will of the Lord and let His will alone prevail." The disciple said, "Master ! We believe what you say. But how shall we conceive of the Lord ?" The Master quickly replied, "The Lord becomes what we make Him and remains beyond. His Name is the most convenient approach to Him." The Master had discovered the Supreme God for himself and he wanted the people to see Him. For the Master the Supreme God was symbolised by the deity Shri Rama. Such a concrete symbol of the Lord is of immense spiritual value to the seeker. Seekers of God can conveniently come together in the shrine and show the Lord their adoration, praise, prayer and reverence. The shrine then becomes a holy place for group prayer and seekers can practise contemplation before the Lord Himself. Hence the Master decided to build a shrine for Shri Rama.

The plan of the temple was prepared by the Master himself. It was to be built as a continuation of his original home. He started the work with only one Rupee in his purse. All the skilled labour came from Gondawali itself. The labourers were paid every week. The money came from what the visitors voluntarily placed before the Master. The temple neared completion but he did not worry about the images. On being asked about

them, he said, "Well! It is none of our business to worry over the affair. He whose temple we have built will worry about it." What the Master said was a spiritual fact. In a village away from Gondawall, a rich man wanted to build a *Ram Mandir*. He kept three images, i.e. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana ready for being installed. In the meantime, his house was burnt down. He had to suspend his plans. The images were kept in a wooden box. When the Master's *Mandir* neared completion, the rich man with the images got a dream. Shri Rama himself appeared to him and asked him to hand over the images to the Master. Thus the images arrived at the proper time. The Deity was to be installed on the *Ram Navami* day. The Master started a seven-day festival of *Bhajan*, *Kirtana*, *Namasmaran* and free feeding of all who came there. Learned pandits arrived from Benaras, Indore, Ujjain, Karad, Satara, Wai and Poona. A large number of disciples gathered for the occasion. On the *Ram Navami* day 1891, the Master himself installed Shri Rama in the *Mandir* at midday. It was a memorable event in the Master's life. His great mission was to lead common men and women towards the sublime heights of divine experience. The common person is always badly in need of an authoritative teaching on the nature of the Divine Being. The

Master possessed such authority in virtue of his personal experience of God. Hence the *Ram Mandir* became a great spiritual landmark for seekers in times to come. All the guests were honoured with presents while the poor villagers were fed to satisfaction. Mother Gitabai enjoyed the function and blessed the Master with a mother's heart.

2. Spiritual Conversion :—

The *Mandir* was thrown open to all seekers of God. It soon became a place of pilgrimage. The persons who came to visit the *Mandir* fell into two distinct types. Those who wanted to make God an instrument of fulfilling their worldly desires belonged to the first type. While those who wanted to make themselves an instrument of God on earth belonged to the second type. A large majority of the visitors represented the first type. They comprised men and women from all walks of life, from all levels of society and from all grades of economic status. They came to meet the Master in order to seek solace from either poverty or physical misery or mental deficiency. Also persons suffering from evil spirits were not uncommon. The Master truly welcomed those who sincerely wished to see God and who were prepared to follow the path of spiritual sadhana. But he was so large-hearted that he

welcomed anyone who came to seek the help of God even for putting right his worldly circumstances. He was quite aware of the type of individuals with whom he dealt and tried his level best to bring about a change in their attitude towards God. Unfliningly he preached a surrender to the Divine will through a *Japam* of the Divine Name and attempted to awaken in them an urge to seek God for His own sake. Here are some instances of individuals who were converted to the spiritual point of view by the master.

First case :—

Balambhat was a priest who first met the Master in Aundh. He was well-built and possessed a voracious appetite. He was also very much addicted to smoke *Ganja* which produces a morbid mental state. The Master pitied the man and invited him to Gondawali. The priest openly said, "Well, I will come to your Gondawali provided you supply *Ganja* to me every day. The Master agreed to do so and Balambhat came to Gondawali. He was given *Ganja* regularly every-day for about two years. One day the Master was very busy with the guests. He forgot about the *Ganja*. The priest kept waiting till dusk. When the drug did not arrive, he got wild and hurried to the *Ram Mandir* for a vehement protest to the Master. He found the Master quite engrossed in conversation with guests. He stood

listening to the Master's words. The topic turned upon evil habits. The Master described graphically the tragic slavery to drugs. Just then he looked at the priest and exclaimed, "Excuse me, O Balambhat ! I am very sorry for being a bit late. Here I am going to the shop." The Master stood up and the crisis came. The priest repented that he used the great Master—a saint and a holy man—for a mean job. With tears in his eyes, he fell at the Master's feet. The Master made him touch the feet of Shri Rama and take a vow that he would never smoke any drug during his lifetime. The priest opened a new page of life. Later on he became a true *Bhakta*. This is conversion through moral regeneration.

Second case :—

A boy from Karad lost his father early and as a consequence fell into evil ways. He went after bad women. His mother failed to bring him round. One day he turned violent enough to beat her. So she brought him to Gondawali. The Master listened to the whole story and assured the mother of an improvement in the boy. He said to the boy, "Dear child, stay here in the *Mandir* with your mother. When your sex revolts, come and sit near me. Chant the holy Name of Shri Rama. He will surely wash away all your sins." Things went on well for some time. Subsequently the mother died. Then the boy slowly

resumed his nightly visits. The Master found it out but kept quiet. On an Ekadashi day, a Brahmin party did *Shayam* in the *Mandir*. Seeing that the Master was busy with the *Shayam*, the boy slipped away. The *Aarti* was performed at 2 a. m. The Master called out for the boy but he was absent. After the guests went to bed, the Master went round with an oil torch in search of the boy. He came across the boy by the riverside. He lay quite asleep with a woman under a tree. The Master pitifully remarked, "Oh, my child!" and covered them with his red *Ramdan* gown. He came back to the *Mandir*. The cold breeze of early morn by the riverside woke up the boy. In a hurry he started to return to the *Mandir*. He casually looked at the cover and remembered that he had no cover with him last night. He recognised the Master's gown and completely broke down. He became absolutely sure that the Master had been there. The crisis came. He began to cry. He said to himself that the Master possessed a mother's heart. His forgiveness knew no bounds. The boy then just thought for a moment. He went to the river, took a cold bath, put on the Master's gown and came back to the *Mandir*. Now he was a radically changed man. The Master blessed him and sent him to Mount Abu for penance. Later on the boy became a great *yogi*. This is spiritual conversion through violent penitence for carnal sins.

Third case :—

There was an orthodox Shastri from Indore. He was very learned in the Vedic lore. He disliked the Name of God. He got wild with the Master and carried on an unending campaign against him. One day he publicly told the Master, "You *Ramdan*! You are ignorant of the Vedas and the Shastras. You are misleading the people when you ask them to take to the Name of God. All of you are fast heading towards hell. Beware!" The Master smiled and modestly replied, "O Reverend Shastri! Forgive me. I am an ignorant man. I am, however, absolutely sure that the Lord loves those who utter His holy Name. His Name has untold spiritual value. You too will take to it soon." The Shastri vehemently disagreed and roared, "Nonsense! I will sing the Name only if I go mad." The Master immediately rejoined, "Who knows God may will that way." But the Shastri said in reply, "Enough of it! Don't you threaten me. I have exposed a number of such *Ramdanis*." He continued to attend the Master's discourses and kept on insolently interrupting him. The Master would purposely wax eloquent on the beauty and value and power of the Divine Name when the Shastri was present. The idea took hold of him. It went into the subconscious and slowly began to gather momentum. For some time it was not strong enough to come into conscious-

new. One day the Shastri awoke at midnight with a muddled head. Soon he was excited, lost control over himself and ran about the town singing loudly the Name of God. People took him to have gone mad. They brought him to the Master who looked at him and said, "There is nothing serious. He has an attack of hysteria. He will be well when the excitement subsides." The Master gave him a cold water bath and placed his hand upon his head. The Shastri went to sleep for about six hours. He woke up quite a changed man. He fell at the Master's feet and begged for initiation. The learned man spent the last days of his life in the study of the Bhagawata and in preaching the value of the Name of God. This is spiritual conversion by the incubation of an idea in the subconscious.

Fourth case :—

Krishnajipant of Kucchi was a man of reason. He hated hypocrisy and irrationalism. He came to see the Master. He closely observed the Master and the persons round him. He was utterly disappointed and began to depart in a fit of anger. The Master stopped him and humbly said, "Sir, may I know your business with me?" Krishnajipant took the opportunity and made a strong reply. He said, "Sir, you are a hypocrite. You are no saint. You are a worldly man, you mislead these ignorant men and women. You

batten upon their presents. Show me any sainthood if you have." The Master was very happy and coolly answered, "Krishnajipant, I want men of your type. I will disclose my spiritual wealth to you." The conversation ended for the day. Krishnajipant did not turn up the next day. On inquiry the Master learnt that he was suffering from an attack of chronic headache. He was sent for and on his arrival the Master touched his forehead. The headache was no more. But Krishnajipant argued, "This is magic, Sir, and no mysticism." The talk then turned upon the marks of saintliness. The Master explained to him at length the nature of Divine Experience, the marks of sainthood and the process by which God's Name leads one to them. Krishnajipant remained unconvinced. But all of a sudden he shouted, "O God, Help me!" and ran out of the *Mandir*. People ran after him and stopped him. He was shocked and was quaking with fear. He said, "The Master is Hanuman himself. I saw him clearly that way." He was brought back and was received by the Master with open arms. He became a great devotee of the Master and maintained the vision in his *Mansapuja* till the end. This is spiritual conversion through a super-sensuous experience.

The same evening the Master addressed the disciples on the subject of conversion. He said,

"A man must be born anew to be able to see God. This is not a birth of the body. It is a moral and spiritual birth. It is a remaking of the old self. Many times the process of the new birth is dramatic. But it need not be so. In many persons it is quite gradual. The new self is free from conflict. God becomes the supreme purpose of life. A life dedicated to God is holy and free from sin. Initiation is a visible symbol of this new birth. The outward rite implies an inward experience. The Name of God brings about the inward experience with the least resistance. It opens the gates of divine grace. The self becomes a son of God. The individual becomes an instrument of God on earth. Therefore, I implore you to take to the Name of God and stick to it."

3. Art of Surrender :—

There was a rich Patil from Parbhani. He had a generous nature and was truly inclined to see God. He also had a fascination for renunciation and desired to enter the *Ramdas* Order. When he met the Master, he was spiritually satisfied and so became his disciple. He then wrote a document dedicating his possessions to Shri Rama. He handed over the document to the Master who smiled at it and asked him to keep it with him. Some years later, the Patil got a mild attack of paralysis. He felt that his last moments had

come. He sent for the Master who readily went to see him. Finding the patient sad, the Master said, "Well Patil ! I hope you are at peace with yourself. Are you or are you not steady in the Name of the Lord ?" With tears in his eyes the Patil replied, "No, Master, No ! I have no peace within me. I have given self and all to God. But He has forsaken me in the end." With extreme tenderness the Master said, "My man ! Be still and listen. Do not blame God. He is above partiality. Self-surrender is surely the key to God's Grace. Self-surrender means giving self and all to Him. You have given all to God but have kept back the self. Hence there is no true self-surrender in your case. If you give your self to God, you need not give Him your all. But if you give your all to God and do not give Him your self, the giving has little spiritual value. The essence of renunciation lies in merging the separative self in the will of God. Such merging is an art. It is a deliberate dying to the self. The seeker must learn to offer his "I," "Me" and "Mine" at the feet of God. It is a slow process of eliminating the self. The Name of God starts this process and also quickens it without friction with family life. Self-will is the real sin. Submission to divine will is the real merit. The Name of God washes the soul of the stain of self-will. Stick to the Divine Name and you will learn the art of surrender to God." The Patil

realised his mistake. He mistook the means for the end. He recovered from the illness and dedicated himself to the *Japan* of the Name. He became an advanced soul and died a very calm death.

4. Conflict With Orthodoxy :—

The Ram Mandir could not accommodate the increasing number of visitors and disciples. Hence the Master built another and a smaller Ram Mandir about fifty yards away. The new Mandir was opened by a group of orthodox and learned priests strictly according to Vedic rites. They were, however, dissatisfied with the Master. He emphasised the supremacy of divine experience, the spiritual efficacy of the divine Name and the purification of the inward nature of man. The priests, on the other hand, emphasised the authority of Vedic words, traditional sacraments and legal observances. The Master invited all to share the divine grace descending via the divine Name. This teaching was contrary to their accepted ideas. Moreover, quite a large number of simple and pious people accepted the Master as their spiritual guide and took seriously to the Name of God. The Ram Mandir ceremony brought the conflict to a head. A meeting was arranged to decide the dispute. The priests argued in the meeting about the sacredness of the Vedas and their injunctions. To them violation of the traditional

Vedic rites meant destruction of Dharma. The Master answered the priests with modesty. He pointed out to them the symbolic nature of the Vedic rites and sacrifices. They stood for spiritual truths. The rites merely as rites possess small value. Vedic Karmas were a means to an end, i. e. the purification of the self. Inward purification was again a means to divine experience. Hence God must run like a thread in the Karmas. This can be done by chanting His Name. Therefore, Vedic Karmas plus the divine Name lead the individual to God. The Master spoke with great conviction and as a result a number of priests sought initiation from him.

5. Crisis of Death :—

Summer in Gondawali is very hot. On a summer afternoon an old and exhausted donkey went tottering along the road. It fell down in front of the Ram Mandir. Someone casually intimated it to the Master who almost ran to the poor animal. He asked for the holy Ganges water and kept gently stroking the animal's face. In the meantime, the disciples were made to sing loudly the Name of God. The Master poured Ganges water into the mouth of the dying donkey. The poor animal opened his eyes, looked affectionately at the Master and left this world. The Master remarked, "I am glad that the grace of God is with the poor animal. He will get a lift in the

side of life. The spiritual law is the same for all living beings."

An old man from Karnatak was ailing for some time. He became serious the same evening. The Master was by his side. With a dose of holy water, the old man departed uttering the divine Name. The Master said, "The grace of God is with him. He goes to a good spiritual level." A disciple who was present at the two deaths inquired, "Master! why does grace descend only at the time of death?" The Master replied, "That is a pertinent question. Every Jiva has a history. It consists of deeds done in various lives. Life ascends from plants to animals and from animals to man. In each life, death is a crisis. The dying thought summarises the whole history of the Jiva. Among human beings particularly it decides the Jiva's way either upwards or downwards. Man is made up of two bodies, namely, the physical and the astral. The astral body which is invisible leaves the physical body at the time of death. The time of death is very critical for spiritual progress. The dying thought decides the next birth. The saint helps the dying man to keep thinking on God with the medium of the Divine Name. A person who leaves this world with the Divine Name on his lips enjoys peace of mind after death. When he comes to birth he dedicates his life to God. This is the meaning of grace at the time of death."

CHAPTER VI

Mother's Pilgrimage

1. The Credentials.
2. Ready for Pilgrimage.
3. Allahabad & Benares.
4. In Ayodhya.
5. Return Home.

1. The Credentials :—

On that day was the feast of *Makar Sankranti*. The Master desired a rich variety of food. The ladies, therefore, were quite busy in the kitchen. It was past midday. The food was ready and all the disciples occupied their seats in the Mandir. One seat remained vacant. The Master kept writing, apparently for no reason. Just then Chintamanibhat, a learned man from Karnatak, arrived to meet him. The Master asked him to take a quick bath and come for food. But Chintamani said with folded hands, "O Master! I have been suffering from stomach-ulcer for the last twelve years. Food is my enemy. I hate food. If I eat it, I suffer from terrible stomachache. I am on milk diet. Kindly leave me alone." The Master smiled at the man's argument and remarked, "Good man! This food is the Prasad of Shri

Shri Rama. The Master sat on a tiger-skin in his usual Padmasana pose. Narayan Appa fell at his feet. The Master said, "Be sure to see me wherever there is the *Japa* of the Name of God and mutual love among human beings." With these words the Master disappeared and Shri Narayan Appa was dazed for some time.

CHAPTER XIII

Apostles and Disciples

1. The Master's Mission :—

The mission of the Master arose out of his own divine experience. He belongs to the line of the mighty interpreters of divine life in India. Human life has two sides, one temporal which belongs to the physical needs of the self, and the other non-temporal which belongs to the spiritual needs of man. The saints teach the secrets of non-temporal ends to humanity through example and precept. The Master did the same thing. He taught that God pervades everything. Nothing in the universe could, therefore, be non-divine. Every object and every situation should serve to unfold the divine within and without. More like a *Vedic Rishi* than like a commentator, the Master helped to give wisdom to the common man and spoke of a synthesis of the worldly and the spiritual. He wanted to see the common man respond to his appeal and to train him to develop a vision of spirit. He preached an Idealism which could become concrete as a dynamic way of life and lead the *Sadhaka* gradually from the

lowest grade of experience to the highest possible for man. He wanted to see that peace and happiness reign on earth. This would happen if men pray to God and the most sublime prayer was "Lord ! Let thy will be done and not mine." The Divine Name was for the Master the symbol of this hardest of all prayers. It was a synopsis of all the implications of spiritual *Sadhana*. Life on this earth is struggle and growth and work. The prayer implies a surrender of our ego i. e. The "I" to God. We prize our egos above everything else. Truly great is the man who offers his "I" to God. Thus the Divine Name implies an awareness of the Divine Presence plus a surrender of the ego to His will. The path of the Name is a shortcut to God. Those persons who take to the Divine Name in its proper sense rise with the least effort to heights of spiritual experience. The Master attempted all his life to awaken the latent spiritual potentialities hidden in the selves of common individuals. His message is "Realise the truth of the non-temporal. The Divine Name signifies that truth. Then you can live unmoved in the confusion of the temporal. The Divine Name makes our *Samsara* a success."

2. Apostles :—

To carry on his work, the Master selected from among his disciples certain personalities made for spreading the Divine Name.

1. Shri Anandasagar.

Shri Anandasagar was the eldest disciple of the Master. He met the Master in Indore. He was quite a young boy when he showed great attachment to God Hanuman. He did a large amount of *Japam* and prayed to Hanuman to lead him to a guru as good as himself. One day he was reading the *Dasabodha*. The Master suddenly appeared before him and said, "Come and see me." Before he could ask the Master any further information, the Master disappeared. He met the Master two days later and was initiated by him. Shri Anandasagar then practised *Sadhana* i. e. the Divine Name at a place near Indore. When he reached the experience of God, he was asked by the Master to build a Rama Mandir at Jalna, near Aurangabad and to spread the gospel of the Divine Name in those parts. He did splendid work for more than a dozen years and left this world in 1907. The Master was at Harda when the news of his death arrived. The Master sadly remarked, "My right hand is gone." The work started by Shri Anandasagar was ably continued by his son-in-law named Shri Ramananda.

2. Shri Brahmananda.

Shri Brahmananda was a famous learned Shastri from Karnatak. He began to develop dry leprosy when he was about twenty and decided to

remain a bachelor. He did great penance in Venkatapur and prayed to the Lord to give him a guru. The Lord told him to go to Indore. Accordingly he travelled to Indore and met the Master there. The Master was surrounded by men, women and children. He was discussing with them their worldly problems. Shri Brahmananda was disappointed to see the guru so much immersed in worldly affairs. He returned to Venkatapur and began his penance again. The Lord pointed to the Master a second time. So he went back to Indore and fell at the Master's feet. The Master asked him to do *Sadhana* i. e. *Japam* on the banks of the Narmada river. When he obtained self-realisation, he came to meet the Master in Gondarwall. The Master deputed him to spread the Divine Name in Gadag and Dharwar. Shri Brahmananda built a Rama *Mandir* in Beldhadi. He also built a grand temple in Venkatapur. In 1918, he was about sixty years of age. He felt that his end was near. So he left Venkatapur for Raywad on the banks of the Krishna and quietly departed there. He held the Master to be an incarnation of the Divine. He was the greatest and the fittest disciple of the Master. He knew no other God than the Master and spread the Name in Karnatak as no one else has done so far. His work is ably carried on by his nephew Shri Bhim Rao. He looks after the temples of Shri

Brahmananda and their spiritual traditions in a very able manner. He welcomes any disciple of the Master with open arms. He has never spared either money or labour to render service to the Master. To him, the Master is the supreme Deity.

3. Shri Bhansahab Ketkar.

Shri Anandasagar had a family but he had turned a *Ramdasi*. Shri Brahmananda remained a bachelor all his life. But Shri Ketkar the elder was a disciple who lived a sublime spiritual life in the married state. He was born in 1847. He entered the P. W. D. Department of the Bombay Government and retired as an officer in 1904. He came to stay with the master after retirement and enjoyed his company for nine years. Shri Ketkar possessed the art of self-surrender to an eminent degree. He gave away everything to the Master once for all and became detached from worldly ties. His was an uneventful life of a pensioner. But he progressed quickly in the way of the Lord because he offered his self and all at the feet of the Master like the *Gopis*. He saw the Master's benign hand working in every event concerning himself and his family. His home was thrown open to all the Master's disciples. It became a centre of the Divine Name. Unlike the first two disciples, Shri Ketkar the elder never preached. But he lived

a life which was a glorious illustration of the spiritual principles preached by the Master. He lived to a pretty old age i. e. ninety two years. He died in Bombay in 1939.

4. Shri Tatyasaheb Ketkar.

Shri Tatyasaheb is a son of Shri Ketkar the elder. Born in 1885, he left off schooling early. He joined the office of the Military Accounts in 1917 and retired in 1948. The grace of the Master is with him and he voices forth the Master's teachings in the Master's own words. Shri Ketkar the younger has ably continued his father's tradition. His home is a centre of Namasmarana and a haven of peace, comfort and counsel for all disciples of the Master. His nonassuming behaviour shows his exemplary humility and his readiness to help the needy is worthy of praise. He has a wife who gives him true spiritual companionship. Shri Ketkar the younger deserves to rank as one of the foremost disciples of the Master.

5. Dr. Kurtakoti.

Born in 1879, Dr. Kurtakoti is now in his eighties. He is not only a great disciple of the Master but is one of the greatest *Adwaita Vedantists* of the twentieth century in India. He met the Master early in life and served him for about nine years as no other disciple could do. The Master loved him the most and has showered his grace

upon him. Dr. Kurtakoti is a cold rationalist in his normal life. But when a reference to the Master is made, his cold rationalism is transformed into the intense heat of feeling and he relates his unique experiences of the Master's divinity with tears in his eyes. He has given a metaphysical background to the teachings of the Master.

6. Shri Narayan Appa.

Shri Narayan Appa who came from Kundagol met the Master in Gondwali at an early age. The Master gave a suggestion that he should dedicate his life to the Name of God. Shri Narayan Appa obeyed and did a very large amount of *Japam*. In course of time the grace of the Master was with him and he attained the status to preach the Name of God. He strictly followed the Master's principles and spread the gospel of the Name in the Mysore State. He was an advanced soul and deserves to be put as a notable disciple of the Master.

3. Disciples :—

There is a very large number of men and women who were given the Divine Name by the Master. Some of them put their heart in *Saffians* and performed *Japam* of the Name with faith, sincerity and love. As a consequence, they attained remarkable heights of spiritual experience. But they are not known to the world at large. Individuals

like Shri Hanmant Rao Kulkarni of Lakundli, Shri Shivappa of Betigiri, Shri Modak of Indore, Shri Ramakrishna Damle, are some of the disciples of the Master who were highly spiritual and witnessed the beauties of devotion here in this life. They advanced in the way of the Lord exclusively by the help of the Divine Name and realised the truth of the Master's preaching regarding the great value of the Name of God. As a matter of fact, the Master is ever present with those who sing the Name of God.

THE SAINT OF GONDAWALI

PART II

SAYINGS

"He who knows that he knows nothing but
the Name of God, knows everything"

The Master

Definitions

1. Truth is that which ever is i. e. Reality.
2. Contemplation means the fastening of the mind to Satchidananda.
3. A tranquil mind means true rest.
4. Bhakti means an awareness of the presence of God.
5. Chastity is abandoning that which makes us forget God.
6. Discretion is doing that which makes us aware of God.
7. A saint is one who is ever happy with inward joy.
8. Worldly-mindedness means being away from God and in the pleasures of the senses.
9. Spiritual-mindedness means being aware of God's presence in the life of the senses.
10. The dark night of the soul is a state of suspense wherein the life of the senses is abandoned but the vision of God is not yet achieved.
11. Inward comfort means an unmoved tranquility of mind.
12. Selfsurrender is that state of mind in which God alone is our strength.
13. Everything other than God is bondage to the soul.

14. A saint is one who thinks and speaks of nothing but God.

15. Bhakti can be defined as doing good works without attachment under the guidance of divine will.

16. Salvation implies the enjoyment of endless bliss under any circumstances.

17. There is a subtle difference between Duty and a deed.

Duty is a deed done without the least attachment to its consequences.

A deed is an activity done with some attachment to its consequences.

18. Contemplation on the divine implies returning counter to the downward current of the world.

19. He who possesses inward humility is the truly great among men.

20. Contemplation of God is merit in the real sense.

21. A man of strength is he who does not fall a prey to temptations.

22. Morality involves two things :—

1. Belief in the existence of God.

2. Conduct based on the consciousness of the presence of God.

23. A deed is moral when it aids the doer to advance towards God.

24. Sadhana means a training of the mind to get it ready for the vision of God.

25. True independence is complete dependence on God.

26. The advance of civilization ought to mean an increase in man's inward comfort and peace.

27. Divine experience transforms the mind into a state which is beyond change.

28. Vedanta means a knowledge of God which becomes organic to the self and is revealed in everyday life.

29. Non-attachment is that state of mind wherein the self is sublimely indifferent to the presence or absence of worldly things.

30. Contemplation positively means a complete concentration of mind on God and negatively it means a complete unawareness of all things other than God.

31. One who listens to the Master's discourses and brings it into practice is a worthy disciple.

32. One who lives the spiritual life himself and then speaks of it to the people is a worthy Master.

33. One who writes a book with an intense desire of doing good to society is a worthy writer.

34. True service to God means to be very busy in doing good works.

35. Poor is the man who has many needs.
Rich is the man who has few needs.

36. Contemplation means never allowing God to get out of consciousness.

37. Contemplation means a pervasion of mind by a loving attention to God just as consciousness pervades the body.

38. Consciousness of divine presence in doing the duties of worldly life is the secret of spiritual *Sadhana* for a man of the world.

39. Selfsurrender means complete absence of I-hood.

40. Being one with God or merging the self in God is the mark of Grace Divine.

41. *Samadhi* implies an un-broken contemplation of the divine.

42. The remark of the *Bhaktas* "O Lord ! I am Thine" is identical with the remark of the *Jnani* "I am Brahman."

43. *Ajapa-Japam* is unbroken and effortless *Japam*.

44. The difference between a *Sadhaka* and a *Siddha* is simple.

The contemplation of the *Sadhaka* sometimes fails while that of the *Siddha* never does so.

45. *Niskama-Karma* is made up of two factors :—

1. The Lord is the doer of all events.

2. Man is merely an instrument in His hands to bring about the event.

46. *Akainans* means the belief that "I am the doer of deeds."

47. A good man is he whom many people love well. He becomes immortal.

48. A bad man is he who loves only himself.

49. Wickedness means making others suffer by destroying their legitimate interests in order to achieve our selfish ends.

50. Worldly life becomes good when it assists the progress of spiritual life.

51. Benevolent work i. e. *Satkarma* implies :

1. Good intention.

2. Right behaviour.

52. *Upasana* i. e. devotion means a continuous growth of the love of God in the soul.

53. A benevolent deed affords inward comfort in the very doing of the deed.

54. *Vairagya* or non-attachment implies a family life lived with the consciousness that the nearest and dearest relatives are not intrinsically related to the real self.

55. One who violates the interior peace and comfort of another man commits sin. Such a man is termed wicked.

56. *Ananda* is bliss that is for all time.

57. Awareness of one's own ignorance is the first step in spiritual life.

58. A man endowed with selfcontrol is truly human.

59. Surrender to the Master means an abolition of the separative self.

60. The Master is he who sees every object as an expression of the Divine.

61. A man is a devotee of God when his loving attention to God remains unmoved even if difficulties invade him in battalions.

62. Saints define goodness as a conviction that nothing else in the world but God is real.

63. A person is imperfect so long as his experience needs an object other than his own self.

64. Wise is the man who learns by experience. Such men are rare.

65. Contemplation of God means true companionship with Him.

66. An idle man is a fool.

67. Interior comfort is natural to spiritual perfection.

68. Interior comfort is *Ananda* or *Sama-dhana*. It is tranquility issuing from God.

69. The real art of living lies in maintaining a balance between outward family life and inward loving attention to God.

70. Pure Reason is that which arises out of divine contemplation.

71. The art of living lies in becoming an instrument of God on earth.

72. Interior peace and satisfaction are the consequences of true knowledge.

73. *Bhakti* means loving God more than one loves his own self.

74. Belief in the existence of God implies :—

1. A conviction of His presence.

2. A conviction of His Omnipotence i. e. He is the Protector and the Deliverer.

3. Behaviour in conformity with the convictions.

75. True progress is progress in *Bhakti*.

76. Contemplation is a state in which the meditating self becomes one with the object of its meditation.

77. *Bhakti* means a saturation of the self by God through His contemplation.

78. Progress in *Bhakti* is measured by the degree of pleasure and pain felt in success and failure respectively.

79. *Religion* means an awareness of the divine background in the discharge of duty.

80. Spiritual life consists of :—

1. Chanting the holy Name of God.

2. Ethical conduct.

3. Love towards all beings.

4. Help to the needy and the miserable.

81. The function of reason is to determine the

present course of conduct with reference to the ideal of divine experience.

82. Penance of speech is twofold :—

1. Silence and 2. To speak words, which will not hurt anybody's feelings.

83. Everyman's pattern of thinking is a product of his desires.

84. Destruction of desires means destruction of ignorance.

85. Truth is a symbol of God.

86. Forgetting God is a kind of suicide.

87. The essence of *Sadhana* consists in making the mind do with compulsion what it has never done so far.

88. Anxiety implies lack of faith in God.

89. *Sadhana* may be described as

(a) Blowing off the ash which hides burning embers or

(b) Walking back a distance which was traversed in a wrong direction.

90. True rebellion means turning the mind forcibly towards God while maintaining the limitations imposed by family circumstances.

91. A holiday becomes a true holy day if we awaken in God's meditation.

92. An inward bliss is the true mark of a festival of God.

93. A conviction that God is the Real cause of events leads to the death of desires.

94. Pursuit of Truth means walking the way to divine experience.

95. Philosophy is worth the name when it shows the way to Eternal Happiness.

96. A *Jnani* or a saint is he whose body and mind are steeped in the Divine.

97. Deeds performed with detachment are spiritualised. They can become holy offerings to God.

98. The most selfish person is the most non-spiritual.

99. A vice is an attribute that stands between the self and God.

100. *Viveka* means doing those things that lead the self to divine *Ananda*.

101. *Vairagya* means avoiding those things that lead the self away from divine *Ananda*.

102. That man is free who does not depend upon anything but God. Nothing stands between him and his God.

103. *Sadhana* involves the process of divinising the self. In the end, "I" and God become one.

104. Abolition of conflict in the mind is a kind of *Samadhi*.

105. Free reason is that which works within the canons of Logic.

106. Wild reason is that which follows the dictates of desire.

107. Solitude is indifference to company.

108. Real danger is that which leads us away from God.

109. Imagination means ideas which possess no reference to objective facts.

110. A saint is a person who enjoys endless bliss.

111. *Spiritual life* is the truly normal life of human beings.

112. The *Vedanta* says, "Brahman is real, the world is unreal." The word unreal does not mean that the world is nothing. It means that the world is not what we take it to be.

113. Detachment means selflessness.

114. Life saturated with selfishness becomes worldly. Life saturated with selflessness becomes divine.

115. Remembering is something we do while forgetting is something that happens to us.

116. A *Jnani* is a person who possesses a firm conviction that God is the only Reality in creation.

117. A saint is one who leads us to a vision of Reality.

118. Insufficiency in one form or another is the nature of worldly life.

119. *Ananda* is the stuff of Reality.

120. The pleasant smile of a saint is the concrete expression of the *Ananda* within.

121. *Sadhana* may be defined as absolute obedience to the will of the Master.

122. Spiritual life is the most sacred applied science.

123. Complete interior peace and comfort are the main marks of divine experience.

124. Great is the man who realises interior comfort himself and helps the world to get at it.

125. Divine inspiration means the most selfless thought.

126. True Grace of God is with him who remains unmoved and unexcited when great honour and worldly success comes to him.

127. *Rama Rajya* means a state in which every citizen is fully aware of the Omnipotence of God.

128. The true "I" is he who lies beyond the three states of consciousness.

129. A goodman is he who lives good thoughts.

130. Life is *spiritual* when it is endowed with tranquility of mind and faith in God.

Life is worldly when it suffers from aimless restlessness and a craving to satisfy fleshly desires.

131. *Ananda* or interior comfort is true wealth.

132. *Shanti* or interior peace is the sign of God's grace.

133. *Satsang* or Association with saints means :

1. A firm belief in their sayings.

2. An effort to mould our mind accordingly.

134. A strong mind is that which carries out what pure reason dictates.

135. The more a man is worldly-wise and selfish, the more is he in bondage.

136. *Karma* becomes endowed with *jeena* when it is done in such a way that it does not bind the soul.

137. *Moksha* means freedom from desire.

138. *Indifference* is the first step to detachment.

139. He who conquers his self is a king.

140. To chant the Name of God means never to forget God.

141. To utter the Name of God means to be aware of His presence all the time.

142. To do *Japam* means to be one with God.

143. *Avidya* means :—

1. Absence of knowledge of the Real.
2. To hold real that which is not the Real.

144. One who knows the self knows God.

145. *Detachment* means absence of craving for the particular fruits of our actions.

146. *Scepticism* about the nature of God is the chief sign of ignorance.

147. The function of the Master is twofold :—

1. He diminishes the desires of the disciple for worldly things.
2. He nourishes and fattens Love of God in the disciple's self.

148. Meditation means an unbroken aspiration of God.

149. There is only one offering worthy of God, namely, the self.

150. Mean is the man who always says words of blame to others.

151. To hurt the feelings of others is to hurt the feelings of God.

152. "Let my will be done" is the first step in worldly life. "Let Thy will be done, O Lord!" is the first step in spiritual life.

153. Food becomes spiritual :—

1. If we eat only when needed by the body.
2. If we eat only as much as is needed by the body.
3. If we eat without being a prey to the taste.

154. A conviction that God guides us in our daily activities is the initial step in contemplation.

155. Renunciation and an awareness of divine presence make up the spirit of *yajna* or sacrifice.

156. Complete selfsurrender is the supreme offering in *yajna*.

157. Spiritual life means doing deeds with a direction towards the divine.

158. Absence of contentment i. e. a dissatisfaction regarding the existing conditions is the distinguishing mark of *Maya*.

159. The greater the contentment the greater the grace of God.

160. Money is the missile of *Maya*.
 161. Selfwill means selfishness which means dualism—*Dwaita* between God and man.
 Self-surrender means selflessness which means oneness—*Advaita* between God and man.
 162. The self i. e. the "I" denuded of everything undivine is God Himself.
 163. Purity of motive means absence of the desire for reward or return.
 164. The Name of God means "Lord ! You are real : I am not. I am thine."
 165. Contemplation means an interior repose born out of a pure and complete resignation to God.
 166. Desire means the feeling of imperfection.
 167. Desire means the feeling of a want or need for being happy.
 168. *Bhakti* means an unbroken contemplation of the Divine Name.
 169. The Master, i. e. the *Guru* is the Divine Name made flesh.
 170. True surrender begins with the belief that the self belongs to God.
 171. Pure reason implies a thirsting aspiration for God.
 172. The mind is a concrete bundle of ideas.
 173. Desire implies a conflict between the will of the self and the will of God.
 174. Wickedness is violence to one's self. It is a type of suicide.

175. *Yags* means joining. A *yagi*, therefore, is one who joins himself to God.
 176. God is goodness itself. There is no evil in God.
 177. Selfishness means an indifference to the interests of others.
 178. *Bhakti* means a canalisation of the energies of the self towards God.
 179. The essence of *Sadhana* is to make an endeavour for supreme delight.
 180. A man of merit is he who relieves the suffering of the miserable and makes them happy.
 181. True knowledge implies a complete freedom from carnal desires.
 182. *Bhakti* means a vision of God's immanence and transcendence.
 183. Complete forgetting of the self culminates in divine experience.
 184. Interior comfort is a state unaffected by good or evil.
 185. *Bhakti* is awareness of God plus unawareness of self.
 186. Surrender is to become universalised.
 187. Comfort of desire means comfort of the flesh through the senses. Comfort of God means *Ananda* i. e. peace through loving contemplation.
 188. Anxiety is a dust-storm which rises in the mind during the absence of God.

189. Bhakti means an effortless union with God.

190. The essence of yoga is to maintain contact with God under all circumstances.

191. The way of life which disturbs interior comfort ought to be wrong.

192. Bhakti means doing good works with a spirit of dedication to God.

193. Moksha means experience of eternal joy.

194. Moksha means experience of Beatitude through contemplation here in this life.

195. Maya means a power of God which is not inevitable but is always present like a shadow with God.

196. Service to a saint consists in abiding by his instructions.

197. A saint is a person who acts through the body but stays outside the body in God.

198. A *jivanmukta* is one who is not bound by the conditions of space and time.

199. Maya is the power of God which stands between the self and God.

The same is called Lila when she does not do so.

200. Works which lead to bondage are children of ignorance.

Works which lead to God are children of knowledge.

The Divine Name

1. The Divine Name is made up of Divine Ananda.

2. The Divine Name is the symbol of God on earth.

3. The Name of God is the holiest thing in creation.

4. God and His Name are the obverse and reverse of one and the same Divine Being.

5. God, His Name and the saints make up the holy Trinity.

6. God, His Name and the saints form an indivisible unity. They are a Three-in-one.

7. The Sadhaka must develop a firm conviction, an intense faith that the Divine Name is the Reality in life.

8. The Name of God is the connecting link between Purusha and Prakriti i. e. between the soul and the mind. Let the mind stick to it in order to gaze into the soul.

9. Unconditioned is the Name Divine. Hence it is beyond change. Sadhanas other than the Name are more or less conditioned. Hence they are subject to change.

10. Contemplation comes to stay when the Name penetrates the hidden layers of the mind.

11. The Name is as unseen and formless as the unconscious.

12. The Name is to be practised for the transformation of the unconscious in man.

13. Transformation of the unconscious by the Divine Name gives rise to interior tranquility on the one hand and to an awareness of the presence of God on the other.

14. The aim of the practice of God's Name ought to be the attainment of interior repose.

15. An inner alertness is of supreme value in the practice of the Divine Name.

16. An unbroken stream of the Divine Name penetrates to the unconscious region of the mind.

17. The Name should be practised both by thought from within and by mouth from without.

18. Divine love arises in a divine mind alone. Practice of the Divine Name makes the mind divine.

19. Immeasurable is the power of the Divine Name. No sin can withstand the impact of the holy Name of God.

20. Every *Sadhaka* is sceptical about the Name in the initial stages of his *Sadhana*. But perseverance in the practice of the Name gradually eliminates his doubts.

21. The *Sadhaka* has reached the end of his *Sadhana* when all doubts melt, distractions disappear and his mind is filled to the brim by the Name of God.

22. The Divine Name helps even the atheist and the unbeliever.

23. Ants run wherever there is sugar. In the same way the Master i. e. the Guru himself visits the person who practices the Divine Name.

24. The Name of God is the royal road to divine experience.

25. Absolute Reality is beyond human conception. Man can think on Reality only through the medium of symbols. The Word or the Name is the most universal and permanent symbol of the Divine available for man.

26. The Name of God is as formless, unborn and unseen as God Himself.

27. The Divine Name ought to be practised with determination in spite of doubts and distractions.

28. The *Sadhaka* should not stop the practice of the Name even if he does not see the image of his deity within himself. The image will voluntarily appear after some time.

29. The Name of God is like a spark of fire. If the spark is properly fanned, it becomes a conflagration. In the same way if we practise the Name with love and faith, it will grow within us and will ultimately make us as wide as the Divine.

30. Pain loses its sting when the self is madened by the Name of God. It matters little then if pain comes.

31. The Name is like a counter weapon. Warriors in the Mahabharata war used weapons and counterweapons. The latter nullified the former. In the same way we must use the counter-

weapon of the Name of God when *Maya* shoots her weapons of worldly lust and greed towards us.

32. The Name of God exists for its own sake. It depends solely upon itself. Therefore, it is perfect.

33. God and the self are today situated poles apart. Both are directly opposite in character. But the self i. e. the "I" has to move towards God. The Divine Name leads the "I" towards Him. The more the "I" forgets itself in the Name the more it approaches the feet of God.

34. The Name of God involves the company of saints.

35. *Maya* reveals herself in the desire for pleasures of the flesh.

God reveals Himself in the desire for the practice of the Divine Name.

36. The Name resides in the being of God. Saints also make their home in the heart of God. Therefore, the Name is inseparable from the saints.

37. The Name of God is like the Sun. When the sun rises, darkness disappears and the world is filled with light. In the same way, the Divine Name sets the self free from sin and fills her with the love of God.

38. A man who intends to devote himself to the practice of the Divine Name after his worldly problems are set right, never gets an opportunity to do so in this life.

39. The Name of God gradually destroys desires of the *Sadhaka*.

40. The practice of the Divine Name and a life immersed in the pleasures of the flesh will go together. One of the two must be abandoned.

41. Valmiki tells us in the Ramayana that Sita saw the ring of Shri Rama and immediately recollected everything about him. In the same way, divine thoughts must flood our mind when we begin to chant the holy Divine Name.

42. The Name is Eternal. It existed before : it exists at present : It will exist when we are no more.

43. The Name of God flowers well within an affectionate mind.

44. The Name achieves the great paradox of spiritual life, namely, the self witnesses willingly her own death.

45. The *Sadhaka* should practise the Name in order to steady the mind in God and also to deliver it from the bonds of carnal desires. The Name shows quick results if it is practised with this aim.

46. Remember the Divine Name and forget the self.

47. The practice of the Divine Name consists of four steps. It washes the soul clean of her

stains of sin as the first step towards God. The soul then becomes athirst for God and develops an attachment to the Name. This is the second step. The soul keeps on growing in love and learns to contemplate on God with the aid of the Name. This is the third step. Now the soul enters the dark night. She begins to feel the pangs of separation. She chants the Name with feeling and offers tearful prayers to the Lord. The Lord is moved and His Grace descends upon the soul. She comes face to face with God and continues to sing the Name as a mark of gratitude. This is the last step.

48. Heat melts butter. So also the Divine Name breaks selfwill to pieces.

49. The Name of God is like an essence. An essence is concentrated. It is always used in very small quantities. Still it produces great results. In the same way practise the Name a little everyday sincerely and selflessly. It is bound to bring about wonderfully grand results.

50. A man is known by a number of names. He responds to each of them. In the same way one and the same God responds to any one of His Names.

51. Quality of *Japam* is more valuable than its quantity. The practice of the Name should emphasise the aspiration for God more than the number of Names uttered by the *Sadhaka*.

52. God is all powerful. But He is helpless in one respect. He becomes a captive of him who chants His sweet holy Name.

53. The key to banish distractions from the mind is to chant the Name Divine.

54. The Divine Name came into being when Reality became God.

55. The function of the Name is to reverse the process of attention. It turns the mind away from the senses towards the God within.

56. The practice of the Divine Name implies absence of attachment.

57. An unbroken utterance of the Name is not an easy matter.

58. The Name comes to stay when doubts go to the dogs.

59. Breathing is common to all humanity so also the Divine Name is the universal *Sadhana* for humanity.

60. When evil thoughts defile the mind, go on chanting the Divine Name. It will arrest their onward march.

61. Chanting the Divine Name is as good as observing silence.

62. The mind wanders like a naughty child. Stick to the Name and it will gradually come round.

63. Reality is Brahman for the Vedantin. The same is the Divine Name for the *Bhakta*.